

letter of power - from Spiller - done

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Curios and Relics

Desk Supplies

Letter Opener from Splinter of Tomb

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



LINCOLNIANA

Edited by Paul Fox

A Unique Lincoln Item in the Collection of Rev. Charles A. Gage

Among the miscellaneous items in the large collection of Lincolniana of Rev. Charles A. Gage, which was recently purchased by THE ECONOMY BOOK STORE, is a wooden letter opener, carved in the shape of a scimitar. It was never owned by Abraham Lincoln, nor was it ever even used by him. Its claim to distinction as a Lincoln item lies in its connection with an unusual incident nearly a third of a century ago.

The Opening of Lincoln's Tomb

On a cold November afternoon in the year 1899, a group had gathered in Oak Ridge Cemetery, in Springfield, Illinois, to witness a solemn and impressive ceremony. The tomb of Abraham Lincoln, which had been erected twenty-eight years before, had fallen into a state of disrepair which made necessary its reconstruction. On this afternoon, the casket was to be removed.

Following the celebrated attempt to steal Lincoln's body, the rough-box containing the casket had been incased in a solid block of concrete, to foil any possible future attempts to repeat this act.

Several Italian workmen were chipping away the concrete, when, despite the care with which they were working, one of the crow-bars slipped, splitting off a sizable splinter from one of the boards of the rough-box. The workman picked it up and tossed it carelessly to one side.

A Souvenir of the Occasion

It fell at the feet of General J. S. Culver, then Commander of the Illinois National Guard, who was watching the procedure in company with John G. Drennan, at that time General Attor-

ney for the Illinois Central Railroad, and Dr. Gage.

General Culver stooped, picked up the splinter, and handed it to Mr. Drennan, saying, "Here is a souvenir of this memorable occasion." Mr. Drennan thanked him, and pocketed the splinter.

After his return to Chicago, he carved from it this letter opener, and kept it on his desk for nearly thirty years. In 1929 he presented it to Dr. Gage as a unique addition to his Lincolniana Collection.

Tomb Has Been Rebuilt Twice

The tomb of Abraham Lincoln at Springfield has been rebuilt twice. The pyramid of stone which tops the obelisk has been elevated to that position three times—at intervals of thirty years, almost to the day. It was first placed there May 22, 1871; again June 1, 1901; and for the third time, May 22, 1931.

It is hoped that the present Memorial to Abraham Lincoln in the capital city of his adopted state will withstand the ravages of time and the elements for a longer period than did the two preceding ones.

Dr. Joel H. Jacobson writes that, "Was Lincoln an Athiest?" was probably not the best way of stating the question which was bothering him. He says there is no doubt in his mind that Abraham Lincoln was a liberal, broad minded, tolerant and religious man. What he did want to know was whether or not Lincoln was affiliated with any denominational church. He says that "Lincoln may have attended services at the Methodist Church at the urgent behest of his wife and to keep peace in his family," but he wonders whether Lincoln was ever a member.

